

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
NEW YORK, NEW HAVEN AND HARTFORD RAILROAD NEAR
KINGSTON, R. I., ON JUNE 26, 1926.

July 15, 1926.

To the Commission:

On June 26, 1926, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad near Kingston, R. I., which resulted in the injury of five employees, one of whom afterwards died, and two Pullman conductors.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the New London Division extending between Waterford, Conn., and Auburn, R. I., a distance of 60.42 miles, this being a double-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a controlled-manual block-signal system; the track circuits of the signal system did not extend throughout the length of the blocks. The point of accident was about 2.7 miles west of Kingston; approaching that point from the west the track is tangent for a distance of more than 1 mile, while the grade is undulating and is 0.205 per cent ascending at the point of accident.

It was slightly foggy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 2,46 a.m.

Description

Westbound freight train UN-1 consisted of 98 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 3346, and was in charge of Conductor Silver and Engineman Moulton. This train passed Kingston at 2.33 a.m. and had reached a point nearly 3 miles beyond Kingston when at about 2.40 a.m. the boiler of engine 3346 exploded, resulting in the derailment of the engine and the first 11 cars in the train. Cars 67 to 73, inclusive, were also derailed, while some of the other cars in the train were damaged. This accident resulted in the death of the engineman, fireman and head brakeman of train UN-1, and wreckage blocked both main tracks.

Eastbound passenger train extra 1364 consisted of nine Pullman sleeping cars, hauled by engine 1364, and was in charge of Conductor Lynch and Engineman Frazier. It left New London, 35.25 miles from Kingston, at 2 a.m., passed

Shannock, the last open office, 5.04 miles west of Kingston, at 2.44 a.m., and collided with the wreckage of train UN-1 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 50 miles an hour.

Engine 1364 was derailed to the right and came to rest on its left side, while the tender came to rest about 75 feet beyond the engine. The first sleeping car was derailed and overturned while the three following sleeping cars were derailed.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Silver, of train UN-1, stated that he was riding in the caboose and that his first knowledge of anything wrong was when he felt the brakes go on in emergency, at which time he thought the speed of his train was between 20 and 30 miles an hour. After his train stopped he started toward the head end and found that some of the cars about two-thirds of the way back from the engine had buckled, fouling the eastbound main track. About that time he heard the passenger train approaching, he at once ran around the wreckage and westward on the eastbound track giving stop signals, in an effort to flag the approaching train before it collided with the cars fouling the eastbound track, however, he could not see the headlight of the approaching train and he had not reached the head end of his train when he heard the crash of the passenger train colliding with the wreckage at the head end of the freight train.

Flagman Ricketts, of train UN-1, stated that as his train was passing Kingston it seemed to be slowing down and after the speed had been reduced to about 15 miles per hour it stopped suddenly. It was dark and foggy and he thought he could see a distance of not more than 10 car lengths. He said he looked ahead but could not see any cars obstructing the other track. He immediately started back to flag; shortly afterwards he heard a train approaching from the opposite direction and after about three minutes he heard the noise of the collision between the passenger train and the wreckage of his train. He then went to a telephone and notified the operator at Kingston of the accident.

Operator Grosh, on duty at Kingston, said train UN-1 passed that point under clear signal indications and after it had passed he heard the engine man sound a road-crossing whistle signal, shortly afterwards he heard the sound of the explosion.

Engineman Frazier, of passenger extra 1364, said he passed Shannock at 2.43 or 2.44 a.m., that he had received clear signal indications at all points en route, and that

after passing through fog from the swamps in the vicinity of the point of accident he saw a wrecked box car, which he thought was about 50 feet distant. He at once shut off steam and applied the air brakes in emergency, the collision with the wreckage occurring immediately afterwards. Engineman Frazier estimated the speed of his train at the time it was wrecked to have been about 50 miles an hour. The statements of Conductor Lynch and Flagman Straub indicated that the first they knew of anything wrong was when the air brakes were applied in emergency, followed within a few seconds by the shock of the derailment.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by passenger extra 1364 colliding with wreckage which had fouled the eastbound main track as a result of the wrecking of a freight train on the adjoining track.

The engineman, fireman and head brakemen of train UN-1 were all killed by the explosion of the locomotive boiler and as a consequence there was no one at the head end of that train to flag the approaching passenger train. The only surviving members of the freight-train crew were Flagman Ricketts, who went back, as required, to flag following trains, and Conductor Silver who started forward from the rear end of the 98-car freight train. After discovering that the eastbound main track was obstructed at a point about 70 cars behind his engine, Conductor Silver ran forward for the purpose of flagging the approaching passenger train, but because of the fog and the derailed cars at the head end obstructing the view he was unable to give any warning to the approaching train before it collided with the wreckage at the head end of his train.

The evidence indicated that the accident to the freight train occurred about four minutes prior to the time at which extra 1364 passed Shannock. Had the signal system in use on this line employed continuous track circuits, warning that the eastbound track was obstructed might possibly have been given in time to have prevented this accident.

The crew of the passenger train were experienced employees and none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.